

WABASH, IN

DRAWING 11A

LINC MONUMENT

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Indiana Memorials

Wabash

Excerpts from newspapers and other sources

From the files of the
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection

the sisters of Mr. New, as well as Mr. Keck, arrived during the week and were wined and dined by the elite of the city, all enjoying it immensely.

On May 31, 1932 a huge crowd, estimated at 6,000 people gathered on the lawn, in the streets, and on the steps ... even the roof of the Court House to watch and hear the program. Dr. Frank E. Jaynes, the beloved pastor of the Christian Church gave the address, and it was well received. At the proper time the canvas was released and several thousand people had their first glimpse of Honest Abe, sitting with bowed head as if in deep study. It was very impressive. Mr. Keck was introduced to the crowds as the sculptor, and as Mayor of the City I accepted the gift with an expression of gratitude to the donor, Alexander New, and some compliments for Mr. Keck for his splendid work on the statue.

Mr. Keck told me later that he had spent two years collecting pictures and inspecting all the Lincoln statues in America, then had molded his statue in clay. In confidence he told me that his statue would go down in history as the finest Lincoln that had ever been produced. This statement was endorsed by Robert Kingery of Springfield, Superintendent of Parks for the State of Illinois, who had responsibility of the Lincoln Tomb in Springfield. Charles Keck proved to be an interesting personality; he didn't fit my idea of a sculptor, but appeared as a very well-dressed business man. The sisters of Mr. New, Mrs. Blumenthal and Mrs. Livingston, were delighted with him.

It was a big day in Wabash, and the statue has been the scene of annual Boy Scout Pilgrimages and decorations on Lincoln's Birthday for many years. In time, spotlights were placed in front of the memorial that it might be viewed at night by travelers through our city. Evergreens were planted as well as roses and it is most attractive during the summer months.

Unfortunately, Alexander New passed away on April 5, 1931, and did not see the project finished. He was a great American, and our city will be eternally grateful to him for this gift. Every boy and

girl should know the story, and should visit the memorial, and read again and again the words inscribed thereon.



For Further Information
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The Story of

The Lincoln Monument

and its Donor
Alexander New



THE STORY OF THE DONOR, ALEXANDER NEW

Alexander New was born in Wabash on June 2, 1861, the son of Isaac and Henrietta New. These parents came to America from Bavaria in 1840, living first in New York City, then in Atlanta, from where they moved to Wabash. Here Isaac opened a clothing store, I. New & Son, which was successful and operated until 1933, in the late years by Henry New.

Ten children were born to Isaac and Henrietta. In addition to Alexander were brothers Charles, Joseph, Theodore, Henry and Martin, who died in infancy, and sisters Hannah N. Barth, Nell N. Livingston, Rosetta N. Myers and Jeanette N. Blumenthal. The ability of the parents to raise and educate this large family in a strange land testifies to their energy and strength of character.

Alexander New attended Wabash schools and after graduation from High School majored in Law at Washington and Jefferson University, where he was graduated in 1886. After study and experience in the office of Cowgill, Shively and Cowgill in Wabash, he went to Indianapolis where he had further experience and was admitted to the Bar. Feeling that there was better opportunity in Kansas City he moved there, became a partner in a law firm and then joined a larger firm. His success was meteoric and from 1895 to 1913 he had an excellent reputation as a trial lawyer in Kansas City and throughout the state.

He became convinced that his greatest opportunity was in business or corporation law. Having inherited a talent for marketing he became known as a "business physician" and in 1915 was called to New York City to become president of Mercantile Stores Corporation. He also served as general counsel for the Cudahy Corporation; Equitable Life Assurance Society; Oklahoma, Missouri and Gulf Railway; Penn Mutual Life; and many other widely known companies. At Kansas City he was interested in hospital expansion and

other civic enterprises. After 15 years of outstanding success with Mercantile Stores he was made board chairman in 1930 but served in that capacity for only a year as he died in Tucson, Arizona, on April 5, 1931. He had never married, dedicating his life to his profession and public service.

In his later years Alexander New decided to provide a memorial in Wabash to his parents, who had the thrift, courage and energy to succeed in business and contribute to their city while raising a fine family. He became acquainted with the famous sculptor, Charles Keck, and commissioned him to create a statue of Abraham Lincoln, whom he had always admired. In 1930 New brought Keck to Wabash to select a site for the statue. During his last visit to his old home he spoke to boyhood friends of his love for Wabash and of his plans to present the statue to it. He is an example of a Wabash boy who had outstanding success and also the vision and the generosity to express his gratitude in an enduring and inspiring way.

The Lincoln Monument was placed on the Court House Lawn on May 31, 1932. The County Commissioners had been notified previously of the wishes of Mr. New to place the memorial there and had granted their permission in March. The complete polished granite stones, properly inscribed, as well as the bronze statue were ready for shipment. As the Mayor of Wabash I was asked to sit in at a meeting in the Court House to discuss details of the completion and acceptance of the gift. I met there a group of people — among them Mrs. James Wilson, Mrs. Harry Pettit, Mrs. Isaac Beitman, Mrs. J.D. Adams and two or three others interested in the project. They introduced me to a Mr. Benish of New York City, a monument dealer who had the contract for furnishing the granite and the bronze statue.

I was told Mr. New had set aside some \$75,000, a good part of which was to be used for the memorial dedicated to his father and mother.

I asked Mr. Benish who was to set the monument, and he told me that he had one proposal from a Chicago firm which offered to do the job for \$250. I asked about the weight of the blocks of stone and he told me that four of the pieces weighed 8200 pounds and the smaller piece 6200 pounds. I told him I was also in the monument business and would be happy to set the stone for \$245. He agreed that would be fine and asked me to draw up a contract which I did, and he signed it. Plans were made for the ceremony, which was set for May 31. In the meantime I made arrangements with Ollie Brown, with whom I had worked for years. He had the truck, the men and the equipment to handle the heavy blocks of polished granite.

About May 20 a flat car from Quincy, Massachusetts arrived containing the granite pieces for the base as well as the bronze statue. I called Ollie Brown and we immediately got the bars, rollers, blocks and boards necessary to handle the monument. The foundation had been finished six weeks before by Fred Hoffman, but it required three full days to set the several pieces and lead the joints. We had plenty of advice and help that we didn't need from the crowds that collected. Mr. New had ordered the best extra-dark Quincy Granite that money could buy, all beautifully polished. In the meantime, Emmanuel Gackenhaimer, who operated a drugstore across the street, came over and asked if he might place a container of pictures and newspapers in the hollow space between the blocks. I agreed, and before long we had quite a collection of fruit jars and other containers that people brought in.

On the third day we brought over the statue, placed it on top of the granite and uncrated it. The crowd was amazed at the size and general appearance of the Great Emancipator. I knew at once that we were looking at a masterpiece, produced by Charles Keck, one of the leading sculptors of his time. We then covered the memorial with canvas and prepared for the big celebration. Two of

